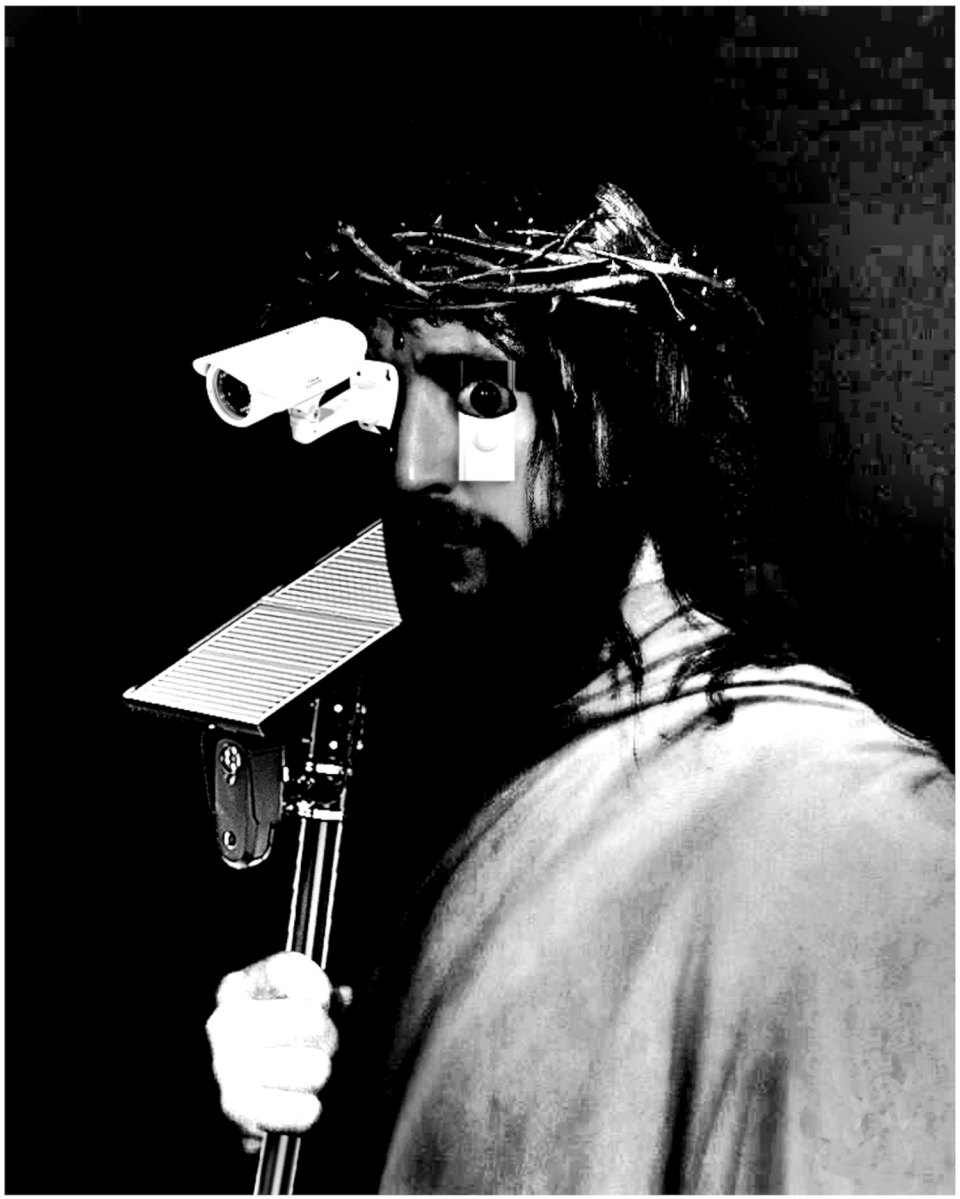
NEVER FEAR, ONLY TRUST AND OBEY



A collection of writings on anarchist opposition to the domination of religion over the spirit

RECOMMENDED FURTHER READING

20 Reasons to Abandon Christianity by Chaz Bufe

Banner of the Antichrist by Enzo Martucci

Christianity: The Tenth Plague by Arnulf Overland

God and the State by Mikhail Bakunin

No Gods by Crimethinc

The Dark Side of Christian History by Helen Ellerbe

The Failure of Christianity by Emma Goldman

The Revolution of Daily Life by Raoul Vaneigem

Thus Spoke Zarathustra by Friedrich Nietzsche

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TAKE YOUR RELIGIOUS CHAINS

YOU DON'T OWN MY SOUL

YOU'VE TRIED TO SOAK OUR BRAINS TO WASTE

WITH HOLY WATER IN A SILVER BOWL

BEWARE OF YOUR GODHOOD

FOR SOON THEY SHALL REBEL

YOU'VE STABBED US WITH YOUR SACRED CROSS

AND BLESSED US WITH THIS LIVING HELL

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LORD, GOD, FATHER AND SON

YOUR PIOUS SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS WITH THEIR GUNS

LORD, GOD, FATHER AND SON

WHY MUST I HANG UPON A CROSS FOR THE SINS I'VE NEVER DONE

BEWARE OF YOUR GODHOOD

FOR SOON THEY WILL REBEL

WE'LL BREAK YOUR CHAINS

I'LL NOT BURN IN YOUR LIVING HELL

Down with the spectacular-commodity economy!

Down with Allah!

Down with the *Koran*!

Down with all the Marxist-Leninists who don’t criticize religion (Islam in particular)

Long live all those who fight tyrannies in Muslim countries!

Long live all those who are fighting the other ruling classes elsewhere!

ANARCHY & RELIGION (2020)

ziq

For a long time, people have identified as "Christian-anarchists", "Jewish-anarchists", "Muslim-anarchists", and so on. This is accepted without question in most anarchist circles, where goals of inclusivity tend to supersede any misgivings people might have with the inherent top-down and patriarchal nature of most religious affiliations.

I don't think it makes any sense to try and merge anarchy with these explicit systems of authority, and much like "anarcho-capitalism", I think attempting to hitch anarchy's wagon to blatant forms of authority is a misguided impulse that comes about in people who have been thoroughly indoctrinated in authoritarian systems and are unwilling to fully part with forms of authority they have nostalgic attachment to. The feeling of comfort or security their religion provides them with leads to them trying to reform their religion into something more egalitarian when they decide they like the economic and societal ideas presented by anarchy, but don't wish to part with their long-held religious beliefs.

I feel I should be clear that anarchists have no right to force their views on people that subscribe to organized religion. I simply want to explore some of the inherently authority-based principles religious organizations hold as sacrosanct and try to understand why religious anarchists feel the need to essentially retcon their favored religion to force a tenuous compatibility with anarchy.

As usual, I should also be clear I don't ascribe to the concept of an "anarchist society", so this isn't an attempt to say religion should be "banned" in a non-existing "anarchist society". I don't think such a thing possible.

Anarchy is an anti-authoritarian mindset, an ongoing process we all go through to question and overcome authority. It is not a artificially constructed system, or a "society" to govern people by. It's not a permanent state of affairs where authority somehow ceases to exist. Authority will always exist, and will especially thrive within formal systems of power and control where conformity and obedience are held up as desirable. And if a group of people did somehow "achieve" anarchy, and then try to forbid people from having religious beliefs, that anarchy would of course immediately be lost in the attempt to assert authority over others.

You can certainly be religious ("spiritual") without supporting authority. You can believe in other-earthly beings or spirits or even gods without needing to build hierarchies and authoritarian rituals around them. But almost all "Big Religion" is absolutely authority-based and was designed that way from its inception.

Monotheism was created by civilized men to accustom the peasantry to being ruled by a great man in the sky, so they'd be equally as amenable to being ruled by a great man in a castle (or later: a presidential palace or a factory or an office).

The authority of monotheism was rapidly forced on the world at the point of the sword, replacing polytheism in the vast majority of cultures. Religious and civil leaders deemed polytheists to be "uncivilized heathens" and slaughtered them if they refused to fall in

> *intensely obstinate hatred of foreigners to capitulate. It compels all nations, on pain of extinction to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilisation into their midst, i.e. to become bourgeois themselves. In other words, it creates a world after its own image". (Communist Manifesto).*

No wonder some already speak of the petrobourgeosie. So Ibn Saud, probably never realised what he was getting into when he boarded that US warship to meet the New Deal, i.e. Roosevelt wayback in 1945. Frank even allowed him to bring a few sheep for his meals! Roosevelt knew all the way what quagmire Ibn Saud was plunging into, i.e. the capitalist mode of prouction. The other front is proletarians who are fed up!

So Mohammed once said: "Whoever monopolizeth is a sinner", it obviously did not apply to him, no more than it applies to all those who exploit us. Those who stole and who were caught had their hands cut off, and often their heads, Mohammed the Holy Profit ordered this. It went down in the *Koran* for future generations. After all Mohammed had God's word. I hear that the present Chancellor of the Exchequer in Britain is taxing those who live in sin. It is really disgusting.

A critique of Islam is but a necessary contribution to a new world. with no commodity, no State and the rest that stands in our way. The tongue of the hidden has started to speak, the Pax Islamica is dissolving like a piece of ice in the midday Mecca sun! Islam is "the arbitrary having broken loose" as Hegel once pointed out. The second part of this document will follow shortly...

Islam is archaic, reactionary in all aspects. The respect for those in power is enshrined in the *Koran*, as of property, as of the family, and the *Koran* is the infallible word of God. All this to ensure that “the exploitation of one class by another is the basis of civilization” as Engels remarked in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*. Indeed Mohammed himself must have bean rich since he could afford more than one wife. Mohammed started with the idea of giving to the poor, but once in power — as did Luther and Lenin — quickly forgot to continue on this golden path. Later he reinforced his power and that of Islam by building mosques in towns “where the basis of Islamic communal prayer” could take place. The Bedouin tribes were truly dispersed and weakened by these new developments. Mohammed scorns the Bedouins in the *Koran*. The 10 commandments, the Talmud, the *Koran* are laws. The lawgivers are the ruling class.

Once this goddam pamphlet starts to circulate from dawn till dusk the wheel of change will never stop spinning, just as Khomeini’s cassettes kept arriving from outside Paris when he was in exile on a main street, so other gestures of protest, critique and anger will keep contradicting those who believe that “God is that which does not pass away”, that is to say traditions. The various ruling classes in Muslim countries are besieged on two fronts:

> *The bourgeoisie (by the rapid improvements of all instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication, draws all, even the most barbarian nations into civilization. The cheap prices of its commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls, with which it forces the barbarian’s*

line with the new world order. It was no accident that monotheism and civilization evolved side by side. Diverse polycultures replaced by a rigid global monoculture that could be easily dominated by rulers.

Slavery was greatly assisted by several of these new monotheist religions that directly condoned the practice, providing easy moral justification for slave owners, and keeping slaves from resisting the system, lest they suffer eternal damnation. The Roman church loudly condemned slaves who escaped their masters, and refused them communion. It's not hard to understand why religious societies were so quick to prop up slavery when the holy books they live their lives by go out of their way to normalize the practice:

> *"Cursed be Canaan! The lowest of slaves will he be to his brothers" (Gn 9:25)*

This is a quote from the Old Testament, where Noah condemns Canaan (Son of Ham) to eternal slavery. Christians and some Muslims then identified Ham's descendants as black Africans, which allowed them to morally justify centuries of racialized slavery in their societies, constructing the idea that certain members of the human race should live in perpetual servitude to them. This is a recurring theme with organized religion, as religious documents invariably build authority in the cultures that hold them up as sacred.

The New Testament continued the tradition of telling the faithful to accept bondage and goes further in telling slaves to accept their slave-masters like they would a God:

> *Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey*

> *them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people. (Ephesians 6:5-7)*

The Bible's legitimization of slavery was predictably taken to its natural conclusion by religious groups throughout history. In Barbados in 1710, the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts were granted plantations to fund their Codrington College. Several hundred slaves were forced to work the plantations and using a red hot iron, their chests were branded with the word "Society", to signify their ownership by the church. To this day, religious people colonize other lands using their holy texts to justify every atrocity they commit. It's much easier to justify atrocities to yourself and others when you can point to a verse in a sacred text and say "the one true God is okay with this". Religion has a way of absolving tyrants of guilt, shifting the blame to mystical authority figures who are beyond reproach.

> *But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. (Matthew 5:39)*

Religions that involve forced body modification, indoctrination as an infant or child, require deference and reverence to godly beings, idols, texts, symbols, elders or church leaders, or simply instruct you to turn the other cheek when you're being exploited, can't honestly be described as being compatible with anarchy. To be an anarchist is to resist authority in every facet of life, not to close your eyes to authority when it's convenient to.

havin reached its integrated spectacular stage as Guy Debord recently wrote in his *Commentaries*.

I am certain that a wider critique will continue to move from country to country, because what is said here many feel deeply in their hearts and they whisper truths about the misery inflicted upon them by those who live well. As in the time of the Old Man of the Mountain, no one is safe in power. This is why I hasten to pen this little treatise on Islam. It has taken 148 years for an ex-Muslim to jump into L. Feuerbach’s shoes. A few years ago I had the chance to read his *Essence of Christianity* when I was abroad. Among all the titles I literally devoured, since you could not find anything critical under Pahlavi, ironically you can find even less under the Khomeinists. Only the *Koran* seems to be allowed. It is like having an iron mask on one’s head. It is truly barbarous. Therefore it is not Allah which knows and sees everything — that Cosmic Voyeur — since ‘he’ does not exist, but well and truly those eyes and ears of the police aided by their sordid informers who always want to know if anyone knows more than they do about the rule of their masters, that is to say the whole of the misery which rests on economic and religious alienation, in order to persecute those who fight back. All this reminds us of the Spanish Inquisition. The Islamic “revolutionary” guards and the different kinds of police in countries where Islam prevails are what George Orwell called the “thought police” in his *1984*.

The critique of Islam necessitates taking apart everything that this legislation stands for. And because: the signs of the decay of this religion are all but apparent. Islam offers nothing but the acceptance of the status quo, that “Heavenly Body” resembles a capsizing ship.

the 10th March to the 24th April 1980), and more recently in that same poor country people took to the strets against the dreaded regime, more than five hundred people were killed by the Algerian army and police. There was widespread torture on those arrested. These uprisings are like a fire that will not go out, just as everywhere else since the conditions in which almost everyone.is forced to live under, ensure that the flames of discontent will not die, proletarian revolution is like Mount Etna, it erupts, and Allah and those in power can do nothing to prevent it. No wonder Mohammed the Holy Profit declared that anarchy, “fawda” that is to say sedition was even graver than assassination. This saying was quickly inscribed into the Koran in order to make sure that those who had power would retain It for ever. Many specialists of Islam cannot criticize this, maybe they are too hypnotized by it.

The essence of Islam is resignation, submission to the order of things, and the will of God, the temporal and spiritual powers are one, as we said earlier there is a similarity between stalinism and Islam, no wonder there is trouble in the Eastern bloc countries. People have had enough of the Kremlin Big Brother telling them what to think and do. The Islamic religion is part and parcel of the State, and the same with stalinism. In Christian countries, the bourgeoisies which rose out of the feudal dark ages could not afford such luxuries such as an all powerful Church which went hand in glove with the State. From then on the bourgeois made sure only the commodity would rule and it would be the next God to be worshipped. What we have today proves it. Nothing is sacred, only things with price tags. In other words the society of the spectacle,

Circumcision is one example of a religious ceremony that has life-long implications. Forcing children to undergo non essential surgery is not an anarchist action, so anyone doing it can't claim to be doing anarchy while forcibly mutilating an infant. Forcibly invading a child's bodily autonomy means you're not practising anarchy. There's no way to pretend that an infant can be a willing participant in such a thing.

Forcing children to participate in your religious practices before they're old enough to make an informed voluntary decision and forcing life-changing rituals on their bodies from infancy places authority on them. They're too young to volunteer to circumcision or baptism or female genital mutilation or even understand what is being done to them.

You can be a religious person and also an anarchist since most people are born into religions and the process of freeing your mind from authority is a lifelong pursuit with no real completion, but you can't claim that forcing unnecessary surgery on a baby is an anarchist action. It's just not. It's entirely anti-anarchy. The same goes for accepting subservience to a master and telling others to be okay with exploitation, to forgive their exploiters and to not fight back.

Organized religion is dictated from above by the church i.e. the authority on the religion. It's a system of rulers and obeyers and has been used to justify every atrocity under the sun. To attempt to redeem these bloody authoritarian institutions by associating them with anarchist ideals is to participate in a coercive and destructive lie. Pinning a black flag to institutions that have carved a path of unrelenting carnage across history: colonizing and slaughtering

everything they touch, does no favors for anarchy, and only helps church authorities mask their blood soaked robes for just long enough to grab their next victim by the neck.

Like all authority, the authority of religion will not stand still. In times of conflict, people who refuse to conform to the favored religion will be scapegoated, will be oppressed, will be murdered in the name of all that is holy and good and just.

A religion is as big an authority as any other and like all authority, its growth cannot be curtailed. Certainly not by a few advocates of more libertarian forms of the religion. The dominant strands will always be unapologetically authoritarian and become brutally oppressive in times of cultural strife and warfare. All the reform-minded offshoots will do is create justification for perpetuating the religion until the mainline authoritarian strands can rain bloody murder down on the godless heathens that resist the authority of the church and its invisible almighty ruler that conveniety can never be held accountable for the atrocities commited in his name.

The Muslim world from Morocco to Indonesia passing through Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Iran, Irak, straight over to Pakistan and down to Nigeria etc... is a real cauldron of misery and possible change. Different forces are at work to make this world collapse. First, the dispossessed no longer want to suffer Allah's "Law" are those who squander the wealth which is the fruit of their exploitation and who are imposing harsher and harsher conditions.

The reason for this pamphlet is quite simple, to make sure that past and present struggles against bloody rulers in Islamic countries are not forgotten. Often it is only in books, pamphlets, posters, newspapers or radio from abroad that we manage to know what goes on elsewhere, or when we meet someone who has been involved directly in some actions, because most often "our" press reports nothing but trivia. For example for the last five years or more they have been showing the same pictures of Allah's Deputy on Earth, the one and only Khomeini. If they announced that he had gone to met his maker, things might take a different turn in Iran. I heard that a few people in London have been saying that he was dead for many years, but no one in the media has taken up this story. Journalists are a sorry lot, the more satellite dishes you have, the less news you get. Or you'll get news in the sky when you die. Tha decomposition of the Press in the completion of media alienation is in full swing, this being the sub-title of a book recently published in Paris, called *The Crude Lie.*

It is with sorrow and pleasure that we can remember the riots of Cairo (Ist January 1977) or the ones in Tunis (26th January 1978), or the uprisinqs which made those in power tremble in Algeria (from

THE MISERY OF ISLAM (1989)

AL-DJOUHALL

The challenge of our times — for us proletarians who live in countries where Islam is part and parcel of the status quo — is to criticize this “religion of the desert”, not for God’s sake but for our very own. So that we don’t have to worry anymore about anyone coming back from the dead to tell us if there is life after death. It seems more human to find out whether there is life before death.

The ruling classes in countries in which Islam still holds sway have enforced a silence on Islamic matters, to the extent that even a simple critique cannot be allowed, because those who rule in the various feudo-bureaucratic dictatorships, use Islam to maintain their hideous grip on the wretched populations. Here we can see a similarity with Eastern bloc countries where truth and freedom of expression are muzzled, stalinism and Islam have a lot in common. Recently the Salman Rushdie affair has brought up to the surface a wealth of materials for analysis. One minute the President of Iran, the Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared that the death order would be rescinded if Mr Rushdie apologised, a few hours later the Ayatollah-in-Chief Khomeini declared that even if Mr Rushdie repented it was the duty of every Muslim to put him to death. Iran today is a tweedeldum and tweedeldee country. The rulers of that devastated part of the world constantly need an external enemy in order to keep the minds of its people away from the mounting daily miseries at home. Mr Rushdie’s book was a Godsend opportunity to unite the flocks. But for how long?

GOD OR FREEDOM? (1868)

Mikhail Bakunin

It has been alleged that we are enemies of free speech because we oppose all religious ideas, but this assertion is in every respect incorrect. We are consistent and principled enemies of every authority, of every ruling power; we also oppose the authoritarian idea of the state, and we will never recognize a social organization that is not based on the freedom of all mankind.

We love freedom so much that we respect the views and opinions of everyone, even if they are in direct opposition to our own. Has not one of the speakers from this platform claimed that Christianity is the foundation of all morality? We have listened to him in silence, and we demand the same tolerance for ourselves to declare our deep conviction that not only Christianity, but also all other religions, whatever name they may bear, are the direct contradiction of all human morality.

We do not oppose religion on a whim; no, we fight it in the name of morality, justice and humanity, and we are convinced that these principles will not be realized in society as long as humanity is influenced by religious utopias and religious superstition.

This profound and true thought, that religion in its entirety is an enemy of all human morality, dignity and justice, was not first proclaimed by us. The great thinkers of the past century had already developed it. This thought had already inspired the noblest spirits, the heroes and martyrs of the Renaissance, such men as Giordano Bruno, Vanini, Servetus, whom Calvin allowed to be burned alive in

Geneva, and many others who saw in the Christian darkness the light of the ancient Greek spirit, and who hoisted the banner of freedom and humanity on every shattered fortress tower of the idea of God and despotism.

This morning I found on the table in our anteroom a prospectus inviting the delegates to subscribe to a book written against the popes. The motto of this book is the words of Ulrik von Hutten: “If humanity wishes to be free, it must first of all break the chains of papist tyranny and free itself from the heavy yoke which corrupt monks and priests have placed on its shoulders.” Who then was Ulrik von Hutten, the hero of the Reformation? Did he break the chains of the Catholic Church in order to submit to the pious Protestant tyranny of a Luther, a Calvin, or a Melanchthon? No, Hutten was an atheist, a friend and disciple of the atheists of Florence, where he became acquainted with the high teachings of the humanists.

This, the great hero of free thought, along with all the great liberators of humanity, who were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured, burned, or otherwise murdered by the executioners, all fell to the tyranny of kings and priests, church and state, but their ideas did not. They disguised themselves in various forms under various names and prepared the mighty work of the humanists in the sixteenth century, and without doubt the learned and wise Erasmus of Rotterdam was their most prominent representative.

In the 17th century the spiritual trend was greatly strengthened by the development of natural science. Galileo, Kepler, Newton, Gassendi, Bacon, the grandfather of modern positivism – built science on the

democracy and humanitarian capitalism or socialism, in which “the people”, “society” or “the human race” play the role of god.

Religion, property, the state and all the other institutions of dominations are based on the fundamental separations that cause social alienation. As such, they constitute the sacred. If we are to again be able to grasp the marvelous as our own, to experience wonder and joy directly on our own terms, to make love with oceans or dance with stars with no gods or priests intervening to tell us what it must mean, or, to put it more simply, if we are to grasp our lives as our own, creating them as we will, then we must attack the sacred in all its forms. We must desecrate the sacredness of property and authority, of ideologies and institutions, of all the gods, temples and fetishes whatever their basis. Only in this way can we experience all of the inner and outer worlds as our own, on the basis of the only equality that can interest us, the equal recognition of what is wonderful in the singularity of each one of us. Only in this way can we experience and create the marvelous in all of its beauty and wonder.

As capitalism began to arise in the Western world and to spread itself through colonial imperialism, a movement of revolt against this process also arose. Far from being a movement for a return to an imagined idyllic past, it carried within itself the seeds of anarchy and true communism. This revolutionary seed was most likely sparked by the interactions of people from several different cultural backgrounds who were being dispossessed in different ways—the poor of Europe whose lands were “enclosed” (shall we say consecrated, which seems strangely synonymous with stolen?), forcing them onto the roads and the seas, African stolen from their homelands, separated from their families and cultures and forced into slavery and indigenous people already in the lands being colonized, finding themselves dispossessed and often slaughtered. Uprisings along the Atlantic seaboard (in Europe, Africa and America) were not infrequent in the 1600’s and early 1700’s, and usually involved egalitarian cooperation between the all of these groups of the dispossessed and exploited.

But to my mind, one of the main weaknesses of this movement of revolt is that it never seemed to completely free itself from the religious perception of the world. While the capitalist class expropriated more and more aspects of the world and of life from the hands of individuals, setting them aside for its in uses and making them accessible only through the appropriate mediation of the rituals of wage labor and commodity exchange, the rebels, for the most part, could not make the final step of rebelling absolutely against the sacred. So they merely opposed one conception of the sacred against another, one morality against another, thus leaving in place social alienation. This is what made it possible to recuperate this revolt for

foundation of reality, which was the death knell for all metaphysical teachings, and consequently for religion as well. From the union of these two trends the great French philosophy of the eighteenth century developed.

This great eighteenth century, whose children we are all, and which still inspires us with its powerful ideas, was in reality the most humane and atheistic century. It recognized man and denied God. Its great spirits have understood that if there is a real desire to liberate humanity, to break its chains, and to bring it happiness, dignity, and freedom, it is necessary first of all to destroy every religious utopia, and all theological and metaphysical concepts, which from the dawn of human history have been a means and a justification of the efforts of all tyrants to enslave, demoralize, and exploit humanity. The philosophers of the eighteenth century were happier than the great thinkers of the Renaissance. The time was ripe, and their powerful and passionate propaganda became the mother of revolution.

Shall I here analyze the causes that prevented the great revolution from realizing all its hopes? That would take us too far. I will suffice to say that the religious doctrines of Jean Jacques Rousseau were an obstacle to the spiritual harmony of the eighteenth century, and were supported by the inconsistent, narrow-minded, and brutal theism of Voltaire, who held that religion was absolutely necessary for the people, for the “scoundrels.” I will only mention that during the Revolution this doctrine united the abstract worship of God with the abstract worship of the State. Both these metaphysical currents, embodied in the black figure of Robespierre, the Calvin of the Revolution, killed the Revolution.

Then began the dictatorship of the First Empire and the union with the Church on the basis of the principle of utility—utility, of course, for despotism. Then came the Restoration with its Catholic decadence and its representatives—the Chateaubriands, the Lamartines, and the Schlegels. And finally came the speculative philosophy of the Germans, which under the name of eclecticism became a state institution in France.

This is the deep cause of our present position, from which it is difficult to escape. But if we really want to save ourselves, we must openly and freely raise the banner of the Renaissance and the Revolution, on which was written: “Man’s Revolt Against the Yoke of God.”

Let us therefore have the courage to openly and freely declare that the existence of God does not permit the happiness, freedom, dignity and reason of mankind. If God exists, then my reason, however strong it may be, my will with all its power, is nothing compared to God’s will and God’s reason. My truth is a lie to him; my will becomes powerless; my freedom and my revolt are sins against him. It is either him or me. If God exists, then I must disappear, and if He is so good that He sends His prophets to make known to me the truth that my reason cannot comprehend, when He sends priests to guide my thoughts, who cannot of themselves distinguish between good and evil, when He sends crowned kings to rule me, then I must submit to His will with slavish submission. He who desires God also desires the enslavement of mankind; either God and the enslavement of mankind, or the freedom of mankind and the abolition of every concept of God. There is no third way. You must decide for yourselves.

the will of god on earth, it too cannot be fought, but must merely be endured. The only link that can be made with this sacred power is that offered by the mediation of religious ritual, a “link” that, in fact, guarantees the continuation of the separation on any practical level. The end of this separation would be the end of the sacred and of religion.

Once we recognize that it is consecration—that is to say, separation—that defines the sacred, it becomes clear why authority, property and all of the institutions of domination are ***sacred***. They are all the social form of separation, the consecration of capacities and wealth that were once accessible to all of us to a specialized use so that now we cannot access except through the proper rituals which maintain the separation. So there it is completely accurate in the literal sense to speak of property as sacred and of commodities as fetishes. Capitalism is profoundly religious.

The history of Western religion has not been one of simple acceptance of the sacred and of god (I don’t have enough knowledge to speak of non-Western religions in this regard). Through out the Middle Ages and beyond there were heretical movements that went so far as to question the very existence of god and of the sacred. Expressed in the language of their time, these movements—the Free Spirits, the Adamites, the Ranters and many others—denied the separation that defined sacredness,claimed divinity as their own and thus reappropriated their will and capacity to act on their own terms, to create their own lives. This, of course placed them at odds with the society around them, the society of the state, economy and religion.

the tasks of normal life and fed by the sacrifices and offerings of those for whom they interpret reality. Of course, the concept that there can be those with a special connection to the meaning of reality implies that there is only one meaning that is universal and that thus requires special attention and capacities to be understood. So, first as shamans and later as priests, these sacred persons expropriate the individual's capacity to create their own meaning. One's poetic encounters with the world become insignificant, and the places, things and beings that are special to an individual are reduced to mere whims with no social significance. They are replaced by the sacred places, things and institutions determined by the priest, which are then kept away from profane laymen and women, presented only through the proper mediation of ritual to guarantee that the minds of the flock remain clouded so that don't see the actual banality of the sacred.

It is precisely the nature of the sacred as *separation* that gives birth to the gods. On close examination, what is a god if not the symbol of the misplaced human capacity to will, to act for oneself, to create life and meaning on one's own terms? And religion, in creating gods, in fact serves the ruling class in a most essential way. It blinds the exploited to the real reason why they are separated from their capacity to determine their own existence. It is not a question of expropriation and social alienation, but of a separation that is inherent in the nature of things. All power resides in the gods, and we can only accept their will, striving to please them as best we can. Anything else is hubris. Thus, the actual expropriation of people's capacities to create their own lives disappears behind a divinely determined fate that cannot be fought. And since the state represents

The profound truth which many are afraid to proclaim openly, this truth that the existence of God does not permit the union of human freedom and reason with the individual and social morality of mankind, is acknowledged by many of the delegates to the Congress, who for various reasons voted with the majority to which we are in opposition. Has not a member of the moderate section clearly declared that the development of the positive sciences must necessarily entail the gradual destruction of all religious dogmas and that therefore education is the best means of the spiritual, political, moral and social emancipation of the masses?

We too are supporters of a good and general education. We too are of the opinion that all science and the highest phenomena must become the spiritual property of the people. But in order for the people to be able to learn, they must first of all have time and opportunity to study, they must be able to support their children while they study. But this is in itself a requirement for a radical transformation of the present economic organization of society.

And this is not all. The supporters of a peaceful revolution, all these freethinking associations, who have led themselves to believe that only by teaching, by written and oral propaganda, they can succeed in crushing the power of religious superstition, they are all making a great mistake. Religion is not only a spiritual darkening of the mind, it is at the same time a passionate and incessant protest against all human feelings and all the struggle against the poverty and narrowness of daily existence. The human imagination creates an artificial world in which the longings, hopes and ideals of all mankind are summed up. Men have made the heavens richer and thereby made the earth poorer. This is what religion has

accomplished; and it will be all-powerful on earth as long as ignorance and injustice reign. Let us finally establish justice and give the earth what belongs to the earth, namely happiness and brotherhood. Let us destroy all the institutions of injustice and tyranny, and create a world of brotherly love, that is, a world where the equal rights of all are based on the mutual solidarity of all, where freedom shall be the result of equality, and religion shall no longer find any place in human society.

But to destroy religion and all the divine reflexes in the human imagination which keep us enslaved and bound in poverty, spiritual enlightenment alone is not sufficient—a social revolution is necessary.

higher authority. The Christian bible makes this explicit when it says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” and “Submit yourselves to the powers that be, for they are ordained of god.” If selective readings of parts of the Judeo-Christian scriptures could inspire revolt, it is unlikely to be the revolt of individuals against all that steals their lives away. Rather it would be a revolt against a particular state with the aim of replacing it with a state based on the “laws of god.”

But religion is far more than just the Judeo-Christian tradition. It is therefore necessary to examine the concept of the sacred itself, the idea that seems to be at the heart of religion. Frequently, these days I hear people lamenting the loss of the sacred. I can’t help but laugh. In this world where borders, boundaries, fences, razor-wire, laws and restrictions of all kinds abound, what is there that is ***not*** sacred; what is there that we can touch, interact with and enjoy freely? But, of course, I misunderstand. People are actually lamenting the loss of wonder, of joy, of that expansive feeling of consuming and being consumed by a vibrant living universe. But if this is what they are lamenting, then why speak of the loss of the sacred, when the concept of the sacred is itself the thing that separated wonder and joy from the world and placed in a separate realm?

The sacred has never actually meant that which is wonderful, awe-inspiring or joyful. It has meant that which is ***consecrated***. Consecration is precisely the process of separating something from normal life, from free and equal availability to everyone to use as they see fit, in order to set it aside for a specialized task. This process begins with the rise of specialists in interpreting the meaning of reality. These specialists are themselves consecrated, separated from

others, transforming their activity into the labor power necessary to reproduce the social order. In the same way, religion (and its current parallels, ideology and psychiatry) is the institution that expropriates the capacity of individuals to interpret their interactions with the worlds around and within them, placing into the hands of a few specialists who create interpretations that serve the interests of power. The processes through which these expropriations are carried out are not really separated, but are rather thoroughly interconnected, forming an integrated network of domination, but I think, in this age when many anarchists seem to take interest in the sacred, it is useful to examine religion as a specific institution of domination.

If currently, at least in the Western-style democracies, the connection between religion and the state seems relatively tenuous, residing in the dogmatic outbursts of an Ashcroft or the occasional blessing from the pope, originally the state and religion were two faces of a single entity. When the rulers were not gods or high priests themselves, they were still ordained by a god through the high priest, specially consecrated to represent god on earth as ruling in his or her name. Thus, the laws of the rulers were the laws of god; their words were god’s words. It is true that eventually religions developed that distinguished the laws of god from those of the state. Generally these religions developed among people undergoing persecution and, thus, feeling the need to appeal to a higher power than that of the state. Thus, these religions supported the concept of rulership, of a law that ruled over individuals as well as over earthly states. So if the ancient Hebrews could distinguish “godly” from “ungodly” rulers, and if the early Christians could say, “We should obey god rather than men”, such statements were not calls for rebellion, but for obedience to a

GODLESS! (2018)

Apio Ludd

Among the various "-ism"s that some (occasionally even I) may use to name the ways that I encounter my worlds, there is one I chose to treat by itself, and that is atheism. The label "atheist" most certainly applies to me, since I don't believe in any god and, beyond this, have no desire for any such being in the worlds I experience. But as Stirner pointed out more than 170 years ago, so many atheists are such utterly pious people, and it can be embarrassing to be associated with such dogmatic true believers.

It's not hard to distinguish pious atheists; the signs are obvious: an obsessive need to evangelize; endless attempts to show they are as moral as...the instigators of crusades and inquisitions, the perpetrators of jihads and witch-hunts; their references to Reason, or Science, or Humanity, or (in the case of marxist pietists) History, the abstract deities that they consider absolute and universal, that is, sacred. They are, in fact, no more atheist than the christian who does not believe in Allah, the moslem has no faith in Brahma, the hindu who rejects Ahura Mazda, the zoroastrian who has no use for Yahweh, or the jew who denies the Trinity. These pious atheists merely reject the gods of every religion except their own: rationalism, positivism, humanism, marxism...

So if "atheist" is broad enough a term to include those who continue to cling to some abstraction as universal or absolute, as provider of "the answer" or "the truth", then perhaps I need a stronger term to express my unbelief. If, like the righteous rationalist, I can rattle off

the brilliant reasons why there is no god, if, like like the pious positivist, I can show no god is need to explain the worlds around me, I also know bevies of bilious and bigoted believers will continue to cling to their easy, empty, anesthetizing answer: faith. A thing I happily no longer have at all.

Neither reason nor science led me to my unbelief. I'm glad that's the case, since each too easily lead to another faith. I grew up with a god ("the god of my fathers" as the faithful say), and that god nearly killed me. But in that very moment, I realized I had a choice. I could choose to kill my god. I could choose to live my life, create myself and my worlds without a god. And so I did and have continued to do for the last forty years. And I've found a beauty and wonder in my life and in the wild worlds I encounter that easy answers, benumbing belief, the festering folly of faith could only suffocate. Having made this choice, I can say I am proudly and joyfully godless. Not merely an atheist, like those whose disbelief in God is merely a cover for their belief in some other, abstract, impersonal Universal Absolute--some other deity to give them their easy answers--, but a genuinely GODLESS, genuinely faithful atheist.

RELIGION: WHEN THE SACRED IMPRISONS THE MARVELOUS (2002)

WOLFI LANDSTREICHER

It is likely that human beings have always had encounters with the world around them and flights of their own imaginations that have evoked an expansive sense of wonder, an experience of the marvelous. Making love to the ocean, devouring the icy, spearmint moon, leaping toward the stars in a mad, delightful dance – such are the wicked imaginings that make the mechanistic conceptions of the world appear so dreary. But sadly in this age the blight of industrialism with its shallow mechanistic logic that springs from the bookkeepers' worldview of capital has damaged many minds, draining reason of passion and passion of the capacity to create its own reasons and find its own meanings in the experience and creation of the marvelous. So many turn to the sacred in search of the sense of joy and wonder, forgetting that the sacred itself is the prison of the marvelous.

The history of religion is really the history of property and of the state. These institutions are all founded on expropriations that together make up social alienation, the alienation of individuals from their capacity for creating their lives on their own terms. Property expropriates access to the material abundance of the world from individuals, placing it into the hands of a few who fence it in and place a price upon it. The state expropriates capacity of individuals to create their lives and relationships on their own terms, placing it into the hands of a few in the form of power to control the lives of